

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN
GRAY 229

Dorian had whispered to her. Lord Henry was
lyirrrr in a silk-draped wicker-chair looking at them.
On a p^ch-
coloured divan sat Lady Narbcrough pretending
to listen to
the Duke's description of the last Brazilian beetle
that he ha,*
added to his collection. Three young men in
elaborate smoking-
suits were handing tea-cakes to some of the
women. The house-
party consisted of twelve people, and there were
more expected
to arrive on the next day.

"What are you two talking about?"¹⁵ said Lord
Henry,
strolling over to the table, and putting his cup
down. I hope
Dorian has told you about my plan for re-
christening everything,,
Gladys. It is a delightful idea."

"But I don't want to be re-christened, Harry,"
rejoined the
Duchess, looking up at him with her wonderful
eyes. "I am
quite satisfied with my own name, and I am sure
Gray
should be satisfied with his."

"My dear Gladys, I would not alter either
name for the
world. They are both perfect. I was thinking
chiefly of
flowers. Yesterday I cut an orchid, for my
buttonhole. It
was a marvellous spotted thing, as effective as the
seven deadh-
sins. In a thoughtless moment I asked one of the
gardeners
what it was called. He told me it was a fine
specimen of
Robinsomana, or something dreadful of that kind.
It is a sad
truth, but we have lost the faculty of giving lovely
names to
things. Names are everything. I never quarrel
with actions.
My one quarrel is with words. That is the reason I
hate vulgar
realism in literature. The man who could call a
spade a spade
should be compelled to use one. It is the only
thing he is
fit for."

"Then what should we call you, Harry?" she
asked.

"His name is Prince Paradox," said Dorian.

"I recognize him in a flash," exclaimed the
Duchess.

"I won't hear of it," laughed Lord Henry,
sinking into a
chair. "From a label there is no escape! I
refuse the title."

"Royalties may not abdicate," fell as a warning
from pretty
lips.

"You wish me to defend my throne, then ? "

"Yes."

"I give the truths of to-morrow."

"I prefer the mistakes of to-day," she answered.

"You disarm me, Gladys," he cried, catching
tHe wilfulness
of her mood.

"Of your shield, Harry: not of your spear."